

King County's LOK-IT-UP Campaign

www.LOKITUP.org



Research shows that safe storage of firearms saves lives. Both unintentional injury, and intentional behavior such as suicide, can be decreased when firearms are stored safely.

King County's LOK-IT-UP campaign, in partnership with Harborview, Seattle Children's, Washington State Department of Health, and multiple law enforcement agencies and gun retailers in King County, Washington, seeks to increase the percentage of households owning guns that use safe storage, and to encourage families of potentially suicidal individuals to safely store weapons and prevent access to guns.

Reducing the availability of highly lethal and commonly used suicide methods [such as guns] has been associated with declines in suicide rates of as much as 30-50% in other countries. The lethality of the method readily available during a suicidal crisis plays an important role in whether the person survives an attempt . . . a survey of people who had seriously considered suicide in the past year found that for about 30%, the suicidal period lasted under an hour. 90% of attempters who survive a nonfatal attempt will not go on to die by suicide thereafter. Safely storing guns also reduces likelihood of gun theft, potentially preventing future use of the unsecured gun in other crimes.

As a **promising practice**, we are working to evaluate the several methods by which we promote safe storage:

- Social and traditional media promoting our website, with information about safe storage devices and facts about the benefits of safe storage in our families and community
- Working with participating retailers to allow purchasers to receive a discount on a lock box when they mention "public health" or "LOK-IT-UP" at the retailer to increase social norms for responsible safe storage practices among residents in King County
- Supporting 'give away' events by working with partners to provide safe storage education and demonstrations to gun owners at events
- Training law enforcement personnel to educate gun owners seeking Concealed Pistol Licenses (CPLs) about the importance of safe storage and directing them to discounts on storage devices
- Working with gun owners at shooting ranges to raise awareness about the importance of safe storage
- Compiling data from King County's Child Death Review on child firearm deaths and access to increase awareness of problem to better inform Public Health programs and community partners
- Training health care providers to assess when 'lethal means' such as guns may be easily accessible to an individual in treatment for potentially suicidal behavior, and counsel families on safe storage.

Research has shown that brief counseling efforts by family physicians has a significant positive impact on the firearm storage habits of their patients. We are working to refine trainings to ensure that providers have the ability to access best trainings with adequate, but not onerous, time commitment.

Each of these approaches requires sustained partnerships with media, retailers, researchers, health care practitioners and gun owners. While we don't yet fully understand the best way to move to a culture of responsible safe storage (as we have to use of car seats and reducing drunk driving), we are committed to continuing to experiment and assess progress, working with our partners, in order to save lives.

References

- 1 Okoro, C.A. et al (2005). Prevalence of household firearms and firearm-storage practices in the 50 states and the District of Columbia: Findings from the Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System, 2002. *Pediatrics*, 116(3): 370-376.
- 2 Grossman, D.C. et al. (2005) Gun storage practices and risk of youth suicide and unintentional firearm injuries. *Journal of the American Medical Association*, 293:707-714
- 3 Barber, CW and Miller, MJ. Reducing a Suicidal Person's Access to Lethal Means of Suicide. *Am J Prev Med* 2014; 47(3S2):S264-S272.
- 4 Albright, TL and Burge, SK. Improving firearm storage habits: impact of brief office counseling by family physicians. *J Am Board Fam Pract* January 2003 16:40-46.

FOR MORE INFORMATION - Contact Whitney Taylor, Public Health – Seattle & King County, Whitney.Taylor@KingCounty.gov or go to our website at www.LOKITUP.org